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Cornell Establishes Agricultural Research Initiative with Vietnam

by Linda McCandless

ITHACA, NY: In the fall of 2002, Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the National Institute for Plant Protection (NIPP) in Hanoi, Vietnam, to establish a long-term collaborative program in research, technology transfer, and capacity building in agriculture.

"NIPP is the lead institute for plant protection in Vietnam," said Dr. Tony Shelton, associate director of the CALS International Program, who has made two visits to Vietnam in the last year. Shelton will coordinate activities with Dr. Nguyen Van Tuat, director of NIPP. Cornell is the first US institution to sign a MOA with NIPP.



Vegetable farm outside of Hanoi.

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"Vietnam has tremendous potential for development in many areas, including agriculture," said Shelton, a professor of entomology. "Vietnam ranks second or third worldwide in coffee production, most of which is exported. However, the majority of the food is produced and consumed locally. There is a great need to develop a safer and more sustainable food system."

The agricultural crops involved in the collaborative effort will focus on vegetables, potato, fruit trees and other crops for which NIPP and Cornell have overlapping expertise. Additional

activities will focus on soil health, biological control, agricultural biotechnology, development and implementation of tools for pest management, pesticide resistance, extension programming and distance learning courses. Disciplines involved in plant protection and IPM, include, but are not limited to, plant breeding, entomology, plant pathology, weed science, horticulture, agronomy, education, communication and rural development.

The goals of the research activities will be to enhance and expand researchers' skills and technical knowledge; institutionalize methodologies for research; and develop and carry out appropriate collaborative research programs.

The goals of the technology transfer will be to provide training in designing and conducting on-farm experiments in traditional and developing agricultural methods; and institutionalize research planning to improve communication between researchers and their peers, government agencies, extension agents, and rural clients.

The goals of the educational mission will be to train Vietnamese and US students at the M.Sc. and Ph.D. level at Cornell and in Vietnam.

In order to reach these goals, several types of collaboration have been proposed, including short-term scientific exchanges and workshops, teaching, and long-term research and outreach activities.

Both CALS and NIPPP acknowledge the importance of identifying and obtaining funding from US and international agencies and foundations to accomplish these goals. "The MOA should be considered a first step in what both institutions hope is a long term collaboration," said Shelton.

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